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Inspiring Action through Graphic Design: An Exploration & Creation of Graphic Design to Bring About Change for Girl's Education Globally

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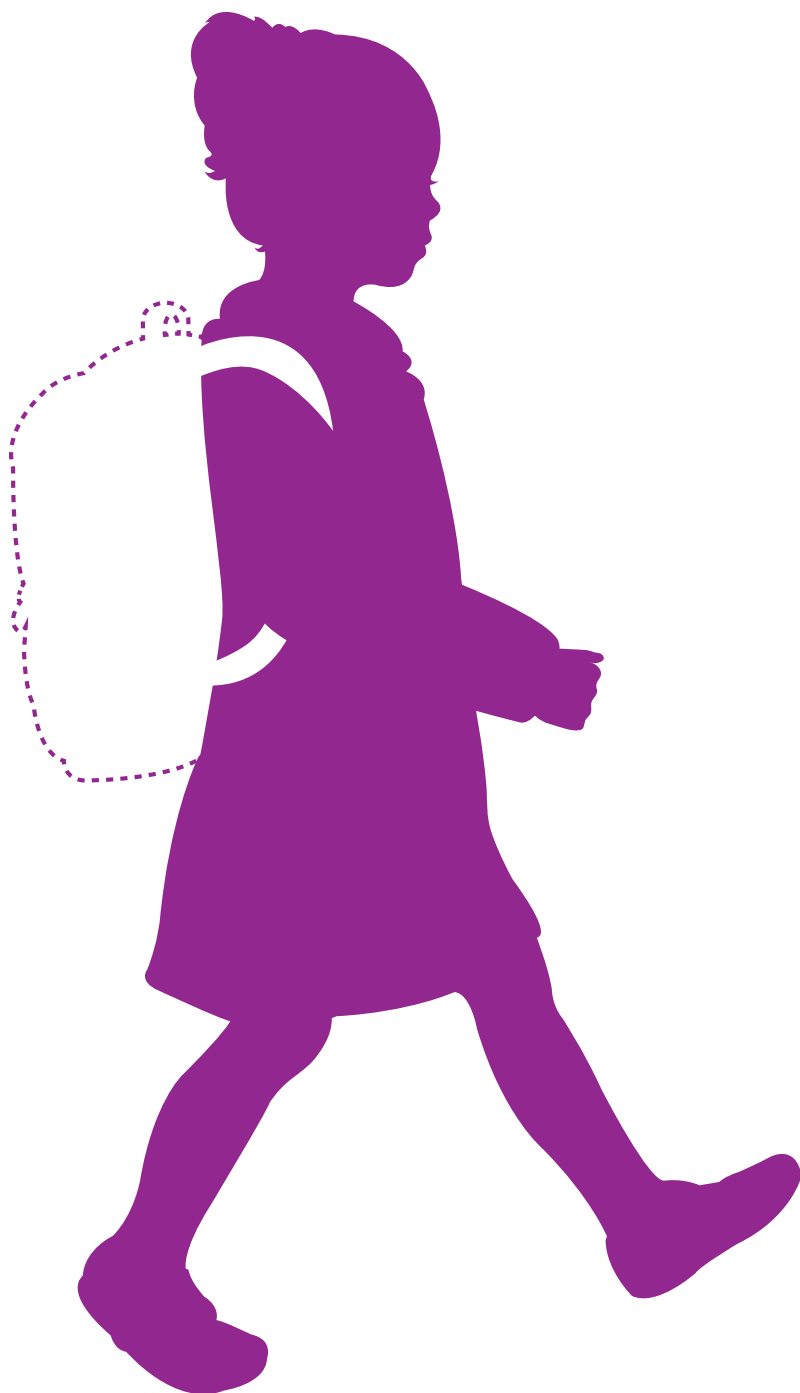
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INSPIRING ACTION THROUGH GRAPHIC DESIGN:


**AN EXPLORATION & CREATION OF GRAPHIC DESIGN TO
BRING ABOUT CHANGE FOR GIRL'S EDUCATION GLOBALLY**

**COMMONWEALTH HONORS IN ART THESIS PROJECT
BY GABRIELLA DINIZ, '14**



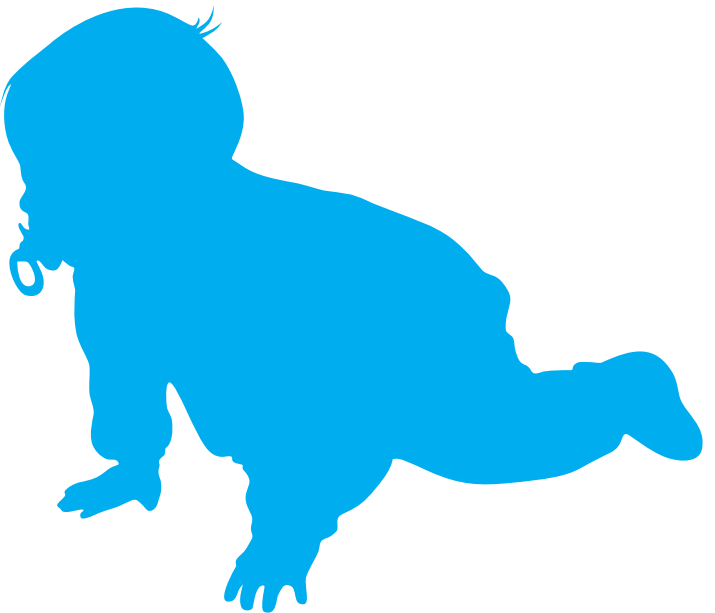
In the forward to the book *Just Design: Socially Conscious Design for Critical Causes* by Christopher Simmons, John Bielenberg shares what he believes to be the bad, worse and good news of the world currently. In his assessment of the good, he explains quite succinctly “If you choose to be optimistic, design is one of the only viable options we have. Design with a big D. Design that includes invention, innovation, human ingenuity and creative problem solving through design thinking and execution.” He calls designers to action, asking them to “shape a positive future for people and the planet” because what we do now will be more important to defining the future of the world than what we know from the past.

For the past three semesters, I have been exploring the role visual language, specifically Graphic Design, has in influencing positive change in our communities. For my honors thesis project in Graphic Design, I focused on current social issues that are meant to promote positive change. Many Graphic Designers and Design organizations today have set out to use their resources, both financial and creative, to do more than design passively. The time is right for making a commitment to serve the greater good through Graphic Design because of the powerful influence it can have on communities. The book *Just Design: Socially Conscious Design for Critical Causes* by Christopher Simmons provides a wide array of sample design projects from a number of design firms across the country and around the world that have promoted causes



such as fair trade food, afterschool programs, sustainability, civic engagement, gender equality, and so many more in service of the community. In his book, *Do Good Design*, David B. Berman exposes the ways in which design is used to manipulate, to expropriate, and to persuade through exploitation of the community. He reveals the way in which these techniques feed into society's constructed need for wealth, sex, beauty and other desires.

One example that resonated with me personally was an anecdote he shared of his travels to Tanzania. Having traveled to Tanzania myself, I was intrigued by his observations and ashamed of myself for not being more aware of my surroundings. He describes the ways in which the Coca Cola Company has expropriated their brand and their identity throughout the country. Cement city markers proudly display their logo throughout Tanzania, school signage contain the logo at the top and the school name beneath, and the island Zanzibar's historical and mysterious "Stone Town" display the logo on signage interrupting the history to remind us to be refreshed with a sip of Coke. All of which I was blind to in my Tanzania travels simply because it is just everywhere in my life, I, like many, have become manipulated to think this brand's imagery is natural in our environment. Berman uses these examples



to call his audience to action, to use design for the benefit of the community, not only in creation but in experience of design as well.

In Simmons' reflections, he highlights works that essentially embody the very notion Berman calls his audience to exude in their works. One project that specifically intrigued me was a senior thesis project done by a student at the California College of the Arts. Janet Lai compared everyday luxuries such as going to the movies and drinking expensive lattes by placing fake gift cards within hand crafted Tiffany & Co. bags. She placed the bags on the wall of her exhibition inviting guests to take and open the bags to read the cards within. On the backs of the cards, she compared how the same amount of money spent on the luxury experience or item could benefit a greater issue globally. She ensured that the bags were removed from the wall in such a way that the remaining bags spelled out the word "help." Lai successfully illustrated an issue by engaging her audience in a meaningful way, allowing them to consider the issues at stake while examining their own lives at the same time.

In a similar way, for my thesis project I wanted to communicate statistics about a social issue to the audience through Graphic Design. After an initial plan of presenting information about several social issues, I decided to narrow the topic to one, in order to present a more intentional and cohesive message to the audience. I was inspired and moved by the work of Girl Rising, a campaign

for girl's education and the value of the girl. The campaign advocates for girls through their major film, *Girl Rising*, and other educational videos and curriculum. The campaign resonated deeply with me and I decided my topic of focus would be girl's education across the globe.

To communicate my intention, I chose three poignant facts regarding the state of girl's education in the world and designed 24 x 36 inch panels that paired these facts with silhouettes of children. The first solid, cyan hued silhouette is of a baby, the fact reads "One-third of girls in the developing world are married before age 18, and one-third of women in the developing world give birth before age 20" (UNICEF). There is a broken line behind the silhouette child, graphically alluding to the idea that the foundation of children around the world has yet to be built with assuredness because education is not a definite reality for their mothers due to marriage and motherhood at such young ages. The second panel illustrates the purple silhouette of young girl with a backpack walking to school. Her statistic reads "The return to a year of secondary education for girls correlates to a 25 percent increase in wages later in life" (UNICEF). Her backpack, like the baby's foundation, is rendered in a broken line visually representing an incomplete

education past primary school for many girls around the world. Finally, the third panel depicts a young girl's yellow-orange silhouette sitting cross-legged on the ground, in thought. The statistic her panel presents reads, "Two-thirds of the 774 million illiterate people in the world are female. (UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013)" Her thoughts are represented by a broken line to express the way in which education helps to form independent understanding and cannot be fully realized without access to education and the ability to read.

The audience is able to walk around the pieces, experiencing them both individually and as a set unified by complementing hue saturations in a warm color palette and repeating visual elements through the vector images and broken line details. The transparent nature of the vinyl on clear acrylic aids not only in the exhibit complimenting the glass and windows of its surrounding space, but also helps to conceptualize the design even further. It alludes to the thought that each of these facts fuse together and overlap to exemplify a greater issue we must work to change for the good of not only all girls and women, but all humans. It is my intention for the audience to be able to experience



the information by reading the facts and being triggered deeply by their coupling with the imagery of small children. Because the installation requires time to walk through and experience the imagery, it allocates a moment for the viewer to process the information and think about what they can do next. Design needs to offer more than just information to influence positive change; it needs to provide the viewer with a plan to take action. Viewers of my installation are able to give back and act on the issue if they feel empowered to do so by taking a card that offers information to guide their next steps. When they get a moment later in the day, they can look back to the card and go to the website link provided to learn about their options for advocacy and support of girl's education globally.

Each panel was designed in Adobe Illustrator; typography is set in Fjalla One. The designs were printed with an Epson inkjet printer onto a transparent adhesive vinyl material. The vinyl was then adhered to a 0.22-inch clear acrylic panel. A black base constructed from wood and plastic supports each of the three panels.

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2/3 OF THE
774 MILLION
ILLITERATE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD
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